प्रस्ताव पर मत लिया गया और पारित हुआ।

अधिनियमन सूत्र यथासंशोधित विधेयक का अंग बना।

शीर्षक विधेयक का अंग बना।

SHRI SHARD YADAV: Sir, I move:

"That the Bill be passed."

प्रस्ताव पारित हुआ।

STATEMENT BY MINISTER

Action Against Indian Insurgent Groups Operating from Bhutan

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI YASHWANT SINHA): Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, we have been informed by the Royal Government of Bhutan that they have launched today military action against Indian insurgent groups operating from camps in that country. The Government of India strongly supports this action of the Royal Government of Bhutan.

His Majesty, the King of Bhutan, had telephonically informed the Prime Minister of the impending action on Saturday, 13th December.

The Prime Minister has conveyed to His Majesty, the King, that the Government and people of India stand firmly and solidly behind the Royal Government of Bhutan at this critical juncture and would provide all necessary support as requested, till the task is completed.

The Indian Army is also taking necessary measures to intercept movements of militants from Bhutan into India.

The Government of India has advised the State Governments of Assam and West Bengal to remain alert to deal with the situation arising out of this action, including sealing the borders and maintaining peace.

The Royal Government of Bhutan has always assured the Government of India that it will not allow its territory to be used for activities inimical to India's interest. The launch of operations against Indian insurgent groups in Bhutan has struck a blow against terrorism and terrorist activities in our entire region.

The action against Indian insurgent groups in Bhutan would prevent further loss of innocent lives by the mindless acts of violence perpetrated by these terrorists. It will promote peace, stability and security in the region and further cement the strong friendship and cooperation between India and Bhutan. Thank you.

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्री रमा शंकर कौशिक) : इस पर स्पष्टीकरण के लिए कुछ माननीय सदस्यों के नाम आए हैं। माननीय डा॰ मनमोहन सिंह।

THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION (DR. MANMOHAN SINGH): Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, I listened with great interest to the statement that has been made just now by the hon. Minister for External Affairs. It is well known that the territory of the friendly State of Bhutan for quite some time was being used by insurgent groups to carry out their nefarious activities in several parts of our country, notably in Assam. We are very happy that the Royal Government of Bhutan has recognised the great danger that the activities of these insurgent groups pose to peace and stability in our region. We welcome the action of the Royal Government of Bhutan and the support that the Government of India have given to this action and I am confident that our two countries, working together, will foil the nefarious design of these insurgent groups to destabilise our region.

SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE (West Bengal): In fact, Sir, I wanted to speak as Dr. Manmohan Singh was not there, because he wanted to whole-heartedly welcome the decisions of His Majesty, the King of Bhutan. We were expecting that friendly country as they are, they would extend their support, and it is a happy occasion. I only expect that the Government of India would extend all possible cooperation, whatever His Majesty's Government, would ask from the Government of India, logistics and otherwise, that should be provided. It is also a welcome decision that the Governments of West Bengal and Assam have been alerted, because these two State Governments will have to bear the brunt; in fact, they are bearing the brunt of the terrorist activities by operating from the Kingdom of Bhutan. Therefore, they should be alerted and there should be a concerted move to see that the terrorists and insurgent groups could be caught and appropriate action could be taken. It is a welcome measure.

SHRI S.S. AHLUWALIA (Jharkhand): Sir, the entire House should unanimously pass a Resolution to welcome this decision of the Kingdom of Bhutan; and the Indian Government has already promised to extend whatever support needed. I think, the whole House should extend its support to the move, in one voice.

SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE (West Bengal): Sir, I think the whole House is one in supporting the statement that has just been made and I would like to supplement what Shri Pranab Mukherjee has just now said, that alertness from the State Governments is what is being required. I think, this is what has been supplemented by the Minister, and the whole thing should be done in a concerted way to see that the nefarious activities of the insurgents do not continue much longer.

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्री रमा शंकर कौशिक) : माननीय स्वराज कौशल।

SHRI SWARAJ KAUSHAL (Haryana): Thank you very much, Mr. Vice-Chairman Sir, for giving me a chance to speak on this. I appreciate the Government of India and the Government of Bhutan, in their operations against the ULFA ...(*Interruptions*). It is against the insurgents, and I hope the operations are against the ULFA as well — or, are they limited to Bodos only ...(*Interruptions*)... all insurgent camps located inside Bhutan. And, Sir, it is not that the Government of Bhutan had not done much. There was a time when the King of Bhutan personally visited the insurgent camps, trying to persuade then that they should close down their camps inside Bhutan.

Sir, I have been wondering, since 1997, we have a ceasefire with the NSCN (I-M). Now, we are quiet as regards other insurgent groups. Now is the time when we have ceasefire with NSCN (I-M) and, I think, this is the time to operate, and this is the time to operate against other insurgent groups as well. You have a kind of ceasefire arrangement with NSCN-K also. But we should also realise the NSCN-K is colluding with the ULFA in Tirup and Changlong districts of Arunachal Pradesh.

Sir, everything has been done to persuade the insurgents to close down their camps and to start a dialogue with the Government of India. But they have not responded. There is an insurgent group in Assam. As tall a leader as Shri Bhupen Hazarika appealed to them, Indira Goswami appealed to them, but they did not respond.

Sir, I believe there are a number of insurgent leaders who are camping inside Bangladesh. Shri Anup Chetia is there and he has asked for political asylum in Bangladesh. Then, Shri Paresh Barua is operating from Bangladesh. There are other insurgent groups.

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्री रमा शंकर कौशिक) : यह जो स्टेटमेंट है, यह वहीं के लिए है।

SHRI SWARAJ KAUSHAL: Sir, I will just complete it in two lines. There are other insurgent leaders who are camping inside Bangladesh. I hope the Government of Bangladesh will also respond and initiate similar steps against other insurgent leaders who are operating against India.

DR. M.N. DAS (Orissa): Mr. Vice-Chairman Sir, may I seek just a simple clarification? Will the hon. Minister of External Affairs, please, inform the House, whether the insurgent groups operating from the side of Bhutan against India are being sponsored by the ISI by providing arms and finance?

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्री रमा शंकर कौशिक) : बता देंगे।

SHRI S. VIDUTHALAI VIRUMBI (Tamil Nadu): Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, as the hon. Member, Ahulwaliaji, has said, the entire House supports it cutting across party lines. At the same time, I want to put a word that innocent people should not become the victims in this operation. I hope, the Government of India would have informed or would inform Bhutan about it. Another friend of mine has mentioned about Bangladesh. I do not want to go beyond Nepal. I feel that the ISI operations are going on, on a large scale, on the Nepal side. Therefore, the Government of India would look into that and the activities of the ISI should also be be stopped by taking action as they have supported the action in Bhutan. Thank You.

SHRI SHANKAR ROY CHOWDHURY (West Bengal): It is a very good news, Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, and I compliment the Government of India for supporting the action of the Government of Bhutan. The Government of Bhutan, as the hon. Minister knows, was quite apprehensive of the reaction in India to such an act particularly in respect of their east to west transit, which has to go through India particularly in Assam. So, the clarification I seek from the hon. Minister is this. While we have certainly warned the Governments of Assam and West Bengal

to be on the alert, I do hope—because this is liable to escalate—the Government of India is also taking adequate action to support these two Governments to counter the reaction which Bhutan fears in West Bengal and Assam. Are they doing so? My second clarification which I seek is: Does the Government of India propose to hold talks with the Governments of Bangladesh and Nepal about anti-Indian activities being operated from their soil? Thank you.

SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA (Rajasthan): I also support the sincere effort being made by the Government as the Leader of the Opposition and Pranabji have mentioned. But I have some points which come to my mind because this morning only there was a news that fresh letters of threats have come to different people, different business communties, Government officers and individuals for all kinds of huge amounts to be given to these insurgent groups. Will you please clarify if you know about it? From Bhutan these people have already come in and they are actively participating in these kinds of activities. Secondly, Sir, do you think Bhutan Government is capable of handling these insurgent groups? One of my friends, Swaraji, has said the King himself went there. But what happened? Even the King could do nothing. So by only doing this paper work, do you think really any purpose will be served? then, are you sure that the camps operating there have been closed and completely cleared, or they are still operating there? If they are cleared, where have these insurgents gone? How much do we know about these insurgents? You have mentioned, Sir, in your statement that the Government of India has advised the State Governments of Assam and West Bengal to remain alert-that is understandable-including ceiling the border and maintaining peace. Ceiling the border is done by the Government of India, not by the State Governments—if I am not correct, please clarify this. If it is you responsibility, what steps are you going to take as the Government of India? The Royal Government of Bhutan has always assured the Government of India of cooperation. Thank you.

SHRI MATILAL SARKAR (Tripura): It is a happy matter that the Royal Government of Bhutan has come forward to take drastic action against the militants and the Government of India has also given an equal response to the Government of Bhutan. In this connection, towards the end of the Statement, it is seen that the Governments of West Bengal and Assam have been alerted about sealing of border. But, so far, as you know, the

sealing of border is concerned, that depends on the deployment of Border Security Force's personnel to monitor that border. The Government knows better whether adequate number of BSF personnel have been deployed there or not. My second point is that the Government of India should equally come forward to interact with Bangladesh and other neighbouring countries where the insurgents are operating from there and coming into India and taking the lives of innocent people. So, the other neighbouring counries also will have to be...

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्री रमा शंकर कौशिक) : यह इससे अलग है, आप इस समय इस स्टेटमैंट तक ही सीमित रहिए।

SHRI MATILAL SARKAR: Sir, I am raising this point because in Tripura, our people are facing attacks from all these insurgents.

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्री रमा शंकर कौशिक) : आपकी समस्या से इंकार नहीं है लेकिन उसको रखने का समय और है।

SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA (Bihar): Sir, the action taken by the Royal Government of Bhutan against the insurgents operating out of their land is a welcome move and I join the entire House in congratulating the Royal Government of Bhutan and the Government of India for such an action. Sir, as you are aware, insurgents are now in a desperate situation and in this situation, they should not be allowed to make Biharis, who are living there in Assam a soft target. So, for their protection what action or steps, would the Government of India like to take? This issue should not be left to the local State Governments because they do not have the requisite sources or the para-military forces to protect these people.

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्री रमा शंकर कौशिक) : इस विषय को उठाने का और कोई मौका देखिएगा। माननीय श्री मनोज भट्टाचार्य।

SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Mr. Vice-Chairman, Sir, this is a connected question. This is an integrated problem and, I think, the hon. External Affairs Minister would be happy to reply to this.

SHRI MANOJ BHATTACHARYA (West Bengal): Thank you, Sir. I would like to seek some clarifications. In fact, some of the points have already been raised by some of my hon. friends. I have only two anxieties, which I would like to express, from the statement that hon. External

Affairs Minister has placed before us. Number one, that we have always been supportive of the Government's comprehensive action to contain and control the insurgency of divisive forces. And, for that matter, this time also, we shall be supportive of the move of the Government of India in congratulating, or, in co-operating with the Government of Bhutan in controlling the insurgency, which was awaited from that place. Now, my question is: The hon Minister for External Affairs is quite will aware that since quite some years, Bhutan had the problem of Nepalese population and there was a continuous fight between the Nepalese and the Bhutanese. And, the Government's position was also not well pronounced. And, we have experienced in West Bengal, particularly in Jalpaigudi District, that huge number of Nepalese refugees came down there and, as a result, there was a huge pressure on the Government's exchequer to contain them or to give them shelter. Now, the Government of India should be very careful about that so that the Government of West Bengal is not unnecessarily pressurised.

Then, I shall also request the Government of India; there are Governments of Assam and West Bengal, of course, because the entire border is absolutely porous. In fact, there is no well-pronounced border. And, going and coming from Bhutan is not a problem. So, surveillance of the border has to be augmented. Further, the Government of India must take adequate responsibility not only by alerting the Government of West Bengal and Assam, but also by providing them with the proper infrastructural support for dealing with the problems that will come as a reaction to this.

SHRI YASHWANT SINHA: Mr. Vice chairman, Sir, I am extremely grateful to all the Members of this House for lending their support to the action that the Royal Government of Bhutan has started against the Indian Insurgent Groups. It has proved, once again, if such proof was at all necessary, that when it comes to matters of national security, this House, the Parliament of India, and, the people of India will stand solidly together to face such issues.

Mr. Vice Chairman, Sir, I think, we all need to applaud the Royal Government of Bhutan, and especially, His Majesty, the King of Bhutan who has decided to move against the Indian Insurgent Groups operating

5.00 P.M.

from Bhutan. Sir, as the House is aware, this is not merely restricted to one group or another. It has been action against all the Indian Insurgent Groups, which are operating out of Bhutan. This includes the United Liberation Front of Assam, it includes the National Democratic Front of Bodoland, and, it also includes the Kamtapur Liberation Organisation. So, all these three groups are being attacked by the Royal Bhutanese Army, simultaneously. the action started this morning, and therefore, it is, perhaps, a little too early for us to judge the outcome of that. All that we can do, at this point of time, is to wish them the very best in this endeavour that they are making.

Sir, after His Majesty, the King of Bhutan spoke to the Prime Minister on Saturday, the 13th December, —and I correct that small typographical error; it was Saturday, the 13th and not the Friday, the 13th—we had alerted our security forces. So as I have said in my statement, the Indian Army is taking necessary measures to intercept any movement of militants from Bhutan into India. The Army is positioned all those stategic locations through which these insurgents might try and find their way into India. So, the Army is there; other security forces are there in full strength, and, we will prevent any Eastward or Southward movement of these militants.

General Roy Chowdhury asked me about the protection of the Bhutanese interest. I would like to assure him that while we have discussed this with the Royal Government of Bhutan, at the same time, we have tried to take care of all their concerns including convoys to Bhutan that moved through Indian territory. So, we are providing, and, we will continue to provide protection to these convoys.

Sir, as far as the State Governments of Assam and West Bengal are concerned, I am very happy to inform the House that the Government of India is in very close touch with them. We are receiving the fullest cooperation from these two State Governments. The Army and the security forces are there. The local security forces are there. Together, we are trying to keep the border sealed. We are not going into the question of whether it is the Government of India's responsibility or the State Government's responsibility, together we are trying to do this, and the State Governments, as I said, are fully alert to the situation, and, we will

continue to hope that this alertness of the Government of India's agencies and security forces and the State Government's agencies and the security forces will prevent any untoward incident from taking place within our territory.

Sir, with regard to the Royal Government of Bhutan, as a sovereign entity, they have taken this action independently. They have been in touch with us, and, as I have said in my statement, we have promised whatever assistance the Royal Government of Bhutan would want from us, and, I have also said that this assistance will continue to be available to the Royal Government of Bhutan until the task in hand is completed, which means until we have dealt with these insurgent groups in the territory of Bhutan. Now, what are the casualties, what are the details, at this point of time, unfortunately, those details are not available. As and when something important happens, we will, in the best Parliamentary tradition, keep the Parliament informed, and I will come back and share those things with the House.

Some other issues, Sir, have been raised, but you have already ruled them out. So, I am not referring to them.

I would once again like to express my gratitude to the entire House for the manner in which this action of the Royal Government of Bhutan has received our support and like to assure the House that as far as the Government of India is concerned, we will be fully alert and fully responsive to the needs of the State Government as well as the Royal Bhutani's Government of Bhutan. thank You.

उपसभाध्यक्ष (श्री रमा शंकर कौशिक): अब हम दिनांक 16 दिसम्बर, 2003 मंगलवार की सुबह 11.00 बजे तक के लिए उठते हैं।

The House then adjourned at one minute past five of the clock till eleven of the clock on Tuesday, the 16th December, 2003.